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RUEHLN RUEHLZ RUEHPOD RUEHROV RUEHSR RUEHVK RUEHYG  
DE RUEHTL #0233/01 0951310  
ZNR UUUUU ZZH  
R 051310Z APR 07  
FM AMEMBASSY TALLINN  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 9710  
INFO RUEHZL/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 04 TALLINN 000233

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DEPT FOR EUR/NB AND INR/B

SENSITIVE  
SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [EN](#)  
SUBJECT: ESTONIA'S NEW GOVERNMENT (PART II): BIOS ON KEY  
OFFICIALS

Ref: A) TALLINN 223  
B) TALLINN 143  
C) 05 TALLINN 909  
D) 06 TALLINN 1131

¶1. (U) Summary. On April 2, the Estonian Reform Party, Isamaa and Res Publica Union (IRL), and the Social Democratic Party (SDE) officially signed a coalition agreement forming the new government. The three-party coalition has 60 seats in the 101-member parliament (Ref A). Prime Minister Andrus Ansip will continue to lead the government. Other Reform Party returnees are Foreign Minister Urmas Paet and Justice Minister Rein Lang. There are several other familiar faces in key positions in the cabinet including former Prime Minister Juhan Parts (Minister of Economy), Ivari Padar (Minister of Finance), and former Tartu University Rector Jaak Aaviksoo (Defense Minister). The one new face is the former head of the Security Police, Juri Pihl (Minister of Internal Affairs), who has hitherto not been politically active. End Summary.

#### BIOGRAPHIES OF KEY OFFICIALS

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Andrus Ansip (Reform), Prime Minister:

¶2. (U) Andrus Ansip has served as Reform Party Chairman since November 2004 and as PM since April 2005. He was born in Tartu, Estonia's second largest city, in 1956. He graduated from Tartu University with a degree in chemistry in 1979 and later attended agronomy courses at the Estonian Academy of Agriculture in 1989. Prior to entering politics, Ansip was a highly successfully entrepreneur, specializing in banking and investment funds. Over the course of his business career, Ansip served as CEO, Trustee, or Board Member of a number of enterprises and investment funds. Although his educational background is primarily in the sciences, Ansip studied business management at York University in Toronto, Canada (1992), and later participated in British Council-sponsored training seminars in Brussels, Dublin, and Edinburgh (2000).

¶3. (U) In 1998, Ansip entered politics and, as a Reform candidate, was elected Mayor of Tartu. He was a popular mayor and served for six years. In September 2004, he stepped down as Mayor of Tartu and joined the Government of Juhan Parts as Minister of Economic Affairs and Communications. Shortly thereafter, in November 2004, former Prime Minister Siim Kallas stepped down as Reform Party Chairman and left Parliament to join the European Commission. Ansip was elected to succeed Kallas. When

the Parts government fell in March 2005, then-President Arnold Ruutel called on Ansip to establish a new coalition. Ansip formed a new coalition with Reform, Center, and People's Union on April 13, 2005. Most pundits thought Ansip was a political lightweight and predicted his government would only serve as a caretaker government until the next parliamentary elections in 2007. However, Ansip proved to be a surprisingly popular leader, and led his party to electoral success this year (Ref B). Ansip personally received the largest number of individual votes in Estonian history.

14. (SBU) During his tenure as PM, Ansip has grown in political stature. He is a dynamic leader who has consistently supported U.S. foreign policy priorities. He is a committed trans-Atlanticist who believes in the primacy of NATO's role in European security. Over the last two years, Ansip has personally spoken out in support of Estonia's mission in Iraq and Afghanistan, often justifying Estonia's presence as repayment for the assistance the country received after re-gaining independence. Ansip demonstrated his commitment to Estonia's participation in the Global War on Terror with trips to Iraq in 2005 and Afghanistan in 2006 (Ref C & D). Ansip is friendly, accessible and straightforward. An avid cross-country skier, he speaks Estonian, English, German, and Russian. He is married and has three daughters.

Urmas Paet (Reform), Minister of Foreign Affairs:

15. (U) Urmas Paet has served as Minister of Foreign Affairs since April 2005. He was born in Tallinn in 1974, and later graduated from Tartu University in 1996. He also attended courses at Sweden's Lund University in

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Organization Management and at the University of Oslo in International Relations. While still a student, Paet worked at Estonian Radio as a foreign news editor from 1991 to 1994. He later moved to Postimees, Estonia's paper of record, where he worked as a reporter and later as senior editor/political reporter from 1994 to 1998.

16. (U) Paet entered politics in 1999 as a political advisor in the Reform Party. His first public office was as Mayor of Nomme, a suburb of Tallinn. He served as mayor for four years before being elected to Parliament with an impressive personal mandate in March 2003. Following the elections, Paet was appointed Minister of Culture in Juhan Parts' government. When Ansip became Prime Minister in 2005, Paet was chosen to be Foreign Minister. He is a member of the Reform Party's Board.

17. (SBU) Since his days as Mayor of Nomme, Paet's popularity with the public and within the party has continued to grow. Capitalizing on the visibility of the Foreign Ministry, Paet has cemented his prominence at the national level; he received the fifth highest number of individual votes in the last elections. Paet is not considered charismatic or outgoing, but is widely acknowledged to be an articulate public speaker. Like PM Ansip, Paet is staunchly pro-U.S., pro-NATO, and pro-EU. He participated in an Embassy-sponsored tour of NATO in 1998. He is widely respected in his party and possesses a formidable power base of supporters in Tallinn. In addition, Paet is also generally respected in the MFA, where he is considered approachable by his staff and delegates responsibility widely among the MFA's principals. Paet speaks Estonian, Russian, English, German and Finnish. He is married, and has two daughters.

Juhan Parts (IRL), Minister of Economic Affairs and Communications:

¶8. (U) Juhan Parts was Prime Minister of Estonia from 2003 to 2005. He was born in Tallinn in 1966 and graduated from Tartu University with a law degree in 1991. Unlike many of his contemporaries, prior to entering politics, Parts was a career civil servant. In 1992, he joined the newly re-established Ministry of Justice (MOJ) shortly after graduating from university. Despite his young age and lack of professional experience, Parts was appointed the MOJ's Deputy Secretary General in 1992. Over the next six years,

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Parts was one of the leaders of Estonian private law reform and helped establish Estonia's court and legal administration systems. In 1998, Parts was appointed Auditor General, an office he used as a bully pulpit to gain national recognition by attacking corruption and calling for government reforms. Parts also worked to infuse state administration with greater responsibility, transparency and efficiency.

¶9. (SBU) In 2002, Parts joined the upstart center-right, "protest" Res Publica Party and became its chairman. (Note: Res Publica was created in 1989 and registered as a political party in 2001. End Note.) In the 2003 elections, Res Publica changed the political landscape in Estonia, winning 28 seats in Parliament and becoming the largest center-right party. Parts formed a coalition government in April 2003 but it floundered quickly, beset by indecisiveness, internal divisions and scandals. When the coalition collapsed in 2005, Parts returned to Parliament. (Note: Under Estonian law, the party can replace Members of Parliament with substitutes. End Note.) Even though Parts' Government is often derided for its scandals and collapse, it was under his watch that Estonia achieved its primary foreign policy goals: membership in both NATO and the EU. Parts speaks Estonian, Russian, and English. (Note: While his English is good, due to his reserved character, it can appear halting. End Note.) Although quiet, Parts is extremely bright with an eye for detail. He is divorced and has a son and daughter. In 2005, Parts participated in the International Visitors Leadership Program (IVLP) on U.S. campaigns and politics.

Jaak Aaviksoo (IRL), Minister of Defense:

¶10. (U) Like many others in the cabinet, Aaviksoo is a native of Tartu (born in 1954). He is a trained

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physicist with a B.S. from Tartu University (1976) and a Ph.D. from the Estonian Academy of Sciences (1981). He has spent almost his entire career in academia and research: Research Associate at the Physics Institute of the Estonian Academy of Sciences (1976-1988); Professor of Optics and Spectroscopy at Tartu University (1992-2007); Academician at the Estonian Academy of Sciences (1994-2007); First Vice-Rector of Tartu University (1992-1995); and Rector of Tartu University (1998-2007). Aaviksoo's only stint outside of academia was as Minister of Culture and Education (1995-1996) and Minister of Education (1996-1997) in Tiit Vahi's Government. From 1981 to 1994, Aaviksoo traveled extensively as a visiting professor/scholar to Russia, Germany, France, and Japan. He is a member of the Estonian Academy of Sciences and the Academic Council of the President of Estonia. Aaviksoo is an accomplished public speaker and a nationally known public intellectual. Over the years, the Embassy has maintained a positive relationship with Aaviksoo, especially during his time as Rector of Tartu University.

¶11. (SBU) Although he is a relative outsider to Estonian politics, Aaviksoo is considered ambitious and outspoken. At a party conference in late 2006, Aaviksoo narrowly lost out to former Prime Minister Mart Laar to be IRL's candidate for Prime Minister. Since Isamaa and Res Publica's merger, Aaviksoo has balked at Laar and other senior Isamaa members' tendency to impose their hierarchical structure on the merged party. This has created tension within IRL and has pit Aaviksoo against old Res Publica comrades like Parts who support Laar. In response to his actions, Aaviksoo has been given the nickname "Tall Savisaar" within the party. (Note: This is a reference to Tallinn Mayor and Center Party Chairman Edgar Savisaar, who is known for his political ruthlessness. End Note.)

Rein Lang (Reform), Minister of Justice

¶12. (U) Rein Lang has been Minister of Justice since April 2005. Born in 1957 in Tartu, Lang lived in Finland as a child during the time his father served at the Soviet embassy in Helsinki. Lang graduated from Tartu University in 1980 with a Law degree and later worked as an attorney. During re-independence, Lang was a legal consultant to Estonia's Constitutional Assembly and helped draft the revised Estonian Constitution in ¶1991. Following re-independence, Lang founded Estonia's first independent radio station in 1992. Over the next several years, Lang built up his broadcasting business and became a well-known political commentator on one of Estonia's most popular talk-radio programs ("The Mid-day Hour"). In 2001, Lang entered politics and served as Deputy Mayor of Tallinn for three years. In 2003, he was elected to Parliament and became Chair of the Committee on EU Affairs. In 2005, Lang was briefly Minister of Foreign Affairs in the Parts Government before becoming Minister of Justice under Ansip. Lang has been a Reform Party member since 1995.

¶13. (SBU) Lang is well known for his fondness for Finland and strong support for Estonian-Finnish relations. Lang is widely viewed as one of the previous government's best ministers for his efficient leadership of the MOJ. In his own party, Lang is held in high esteem; he is often referred to as the "conscience of the party." Over the years, he has been a good contact for the Embassy. He has an open and accessible personality and an ironic and dark sense humor. Lang speaks Estonian, Finnish, English and Russian. Lang participated in an Embassy-sponsored NATO tour in 2004 and a Volunteer Visitor Program (VolvVis) to the United States in 2006 on combating terrorism. He is unmarried, but has a daughter from a previous relationship.

Ivari Padar (SDE), Minister of Finance

¶14. (SBU) Ivari Padar has been the SDE Party Chairman since 2002. He was born in 1965 in Voru County, in southeastern Estonia. He completed his studies in 1995 at the University of Tartu, where he earned a degree in history. After university, Padar worked as a transportation worker, a carpenter, and a school teacher. In 1993, Padar entered local politics and was elected Deputy Mayor of Voru City. In 1994, he was elected Chairman of the Voru County Farmers Union. In

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1995, Padar came to Tallinn to serve as Assistant to the Secretary General of the Ministry of Finance. Padar

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served as Minister of Agriculture from 1999 to 2002, during Mart Laar's second Government. In 2003, Padar was elected to Parliament.

¶15. (SBU) Padar stands in stark contrast to his

predecessor, former SDE Chair and current President of Estonia, Toomas Hendrik Ilves. Whereas Ilves was an intellectual and a politician of national stature, Padar's more humble background has given him the aura of being "one of the people". Padar has carefully cultivated this persona in an attempt to broaden his party's base of supporters. His leadership skills are often characterized as diligent and simple by SDE interlocutors. However, Padar has a reputation for being open and ready to listen to alternate views and opinions. Padar has proven to be a reliable Embassy contact. He is married and has a son and daughter. Padar speaks Estonian, Russian, and English. Padar participated in an Embassy-sponsored NATO tour in 2004.

Juri Pihl (SDE), Minister of Internal Affairs:

¶16. (U) Juri Pihl's entire career has been in law enforcement and national security. He was born in 1954 and has a law degree from Tartu University. He began his career in the Interior Ministry of the Estonian Soviet Socialist Republic (ESSR). After re-independence, Pihl is credited with being the driving force behind the creation of Estonia's Security Police (KAPO, an independent agency responsible for national security) in 1993. Pihl served as KAPO's first Director General for ten years. In 2003, Pihl left the Security Police to become a State Prosecutor. Since 2005, he has served as Secretary General in the Ministry of Justice. Pihl has been a good contact for the Embassy. In 2006, he participated in a VolVis program to the United States on combating terrorism.

¶17. (SBU) Over his long career, Pihl has carefully avoided politics, earning him a reputation as a highly professional civil servant respected across party lines. As a result, SDE's decision to nominate him was considered quite surprising among political pundits. (Note. Pihl officially registered as a member of the SDE only on April 2. End Note.) The press has dubbed Pihl "the most informed man in the country" due to his long career in the security/intelligence community. Pihl speaks Estonian, Russian, and English. He has a grown daughter from a previous marriage.

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